

Message Text

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L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-12

COME-00 EB-11 LAB-06 SIL-01 ACDA-19 AEC-11 GAC-01

IO-12 SAJ-01 SCI-06 NASA-04 NSF-04 /179 R

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY PARIS

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

CINCPAC REP CANBERRA

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 096558

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, PFOR, FR, AS

SUBJ: FRENCH APPROACH RE USE OF NASA AUSTRALIAN TRACKING

STATION FOR FRENCH SATELLITES

REF: CANBERRA 2759

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

1. SUMMARY: FRENCH TODAY URGED US TO APPROACH AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT TO RECONSIDER THEIR DISAPPROVAL OF SUPPORT BY NASA TRACKING STATION IN AUSTRALIA OF TWO FRENCH SATELLITES FIRST OF WHICH TO BE LAUNCHED FROM FRENCH GUIANA MAY 19. DEPARTMENT INDICATED ITS UNWILLINGNESS TO MAKE SUCH AN APPROACH TO THE AUSTRALIANS AT THIS TIME. END SUMMARY.

2. FRENCH COUNSELOR ROCALVE CALLED ON INSTRUCTIONS FROM
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PARIS TO ASK IF U. S. COULD APPROACH AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT DIRECTLY ASKING AUSTRALIANS TO RECONSIDER THEIR DISAPPROVAL OF SUPPORT BY NASA TRACKING STATION IN AUSTRALIA FOR TWO FRENCH SATELLITES, THE FIRST OF WHICH WAS TO BE LAUNCHED FROM FRENCH GUIANA ON MAY 19.

3. ROCALVE RECOUNTED SIMILAR EXPERIENCE LAST YEAR WHEN FRENCH HAD SUPPLIED WRITTEN ASSURANCES THAT SATELLITES WERE FOR SCIENTIFIC PURPOSES ONLY AND WERE NOT CONNECTED WITH FRENCH NUCLEAR TESTS. THE TWO SATELLITES, D5 A AND B, INVOLVED TESTS OF THE INFLUENCE OF GRAVITY ON SATELLITES AND TESTS OF A HYDRAZINE PROPULSION UNIT. THIS EFFORT REPRESENTED AN IMPORTANT LINK FOR COOPERATION BETWEEN CNES AND NASA AND THE SCIENTIFIC VALUE OF THE FRENCH SATELLITES WOULD BE GREATLY REDUCED WITHOUT THE TELEMETRY FROM THE AUSTRALIAN TRACKING STATION. HE SAID IT WAS CLEAR THAT THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT KNEW THAT THESE SATELLITES WERE FOR SCIENTIFIC PURPOSES ONLY AND WERE NOT LINKED TO FRENCH NUCLEAR TESTS. THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR IN CANBERRA ALREADY HAS INSTRUCTIONS TO PROTEST THE AUSTRALIAN DECISION.

4. DEPARTMENT OFFICER TOLD ROCALVE THERE WAS A NEW GOVERNMENT AND NEW PRIME MINISTER IN AUSTRALIA AND THAT THE ISSUES INVOLVED IN THIS WHOLE MATTER WERE LARGELY INTERNAL AUSTRALIAN POLITICS. OUR NASA TRACKING STATION IS THERE FOR NASA PROJECTS ONLY. TO UNDERTAKE NON- NASA PROJECT SUCH AS THIS WE MUST HAVE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT APPROVAL. AS WE UNDERSTAND IT, GIVEN THE FOMENT IN THE AUSTRALIAN TRADE UNIONS, THERE WAS A TOTAL BOYCOTT OF FRENCH TRADE, SHIPPING AND COMMUNICATIONS. APPARENTLY PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM HAS CONSIDERED THAT HE COULD NOT GIVE THE FRENCH ASSISTANCE IN THIS MATTER GIVEN THE STRONG DOMESTIC PRESSURES. DEPARTMENT OFFICER CONTINUED THAT OUR OWN RELATIONS WITH AUSTRALIA ARE NOT PARTICULARLY GOOD AT THIS TIME AND OUR OWN INSTALLATIONS THERE, INCLUDING THE NASA FACILITY, ARE ON A PRECARIOUS FOOTING WITH THE NEW GOVERNMENT.

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5. IN OUR JUDGMENT, THEREFORE, THE U. S. COULD NOT CONSIDER AN APPROACH TO THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT, SINCE IT WAS MOST UNLIKELY TO BE PRODUCTIVE AND COULD WELL DAMAGE OUR OWN BILATERAL INTERESTS WITH AUSTRALIA. RUSH

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